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THE PROGRESS OF SCIENCE

THE LETTERS OF WILLIAM JAMES

Henry James, maintaining in the third generation the literary traditions of a great name, has edited the letters of his father with additional text sufficient to form an adequate biography. When William James died ten years ago, it was remarked in this journal that "his letters would form a volume of surpassing interest, though it may be that they are too personal for publication." The letters now printed are indeed one of the treasures of literature and their intimate character makes vivid a man of such fine distinction that there is no sense of eavesdropping in reading correspondence intended only for a child or for a personal friend.

Mrs. Carlyle accused her husband of writing letters to her with a view to their posthumous publication. The letters of James are as free from any such intention as the biographical notes written by Darwin for his children. They have been selected and edited with care and good judgment. James's life can be read as an open book in which no page need be concealed.

In an unpublished letter, James somewhat pathetically says:

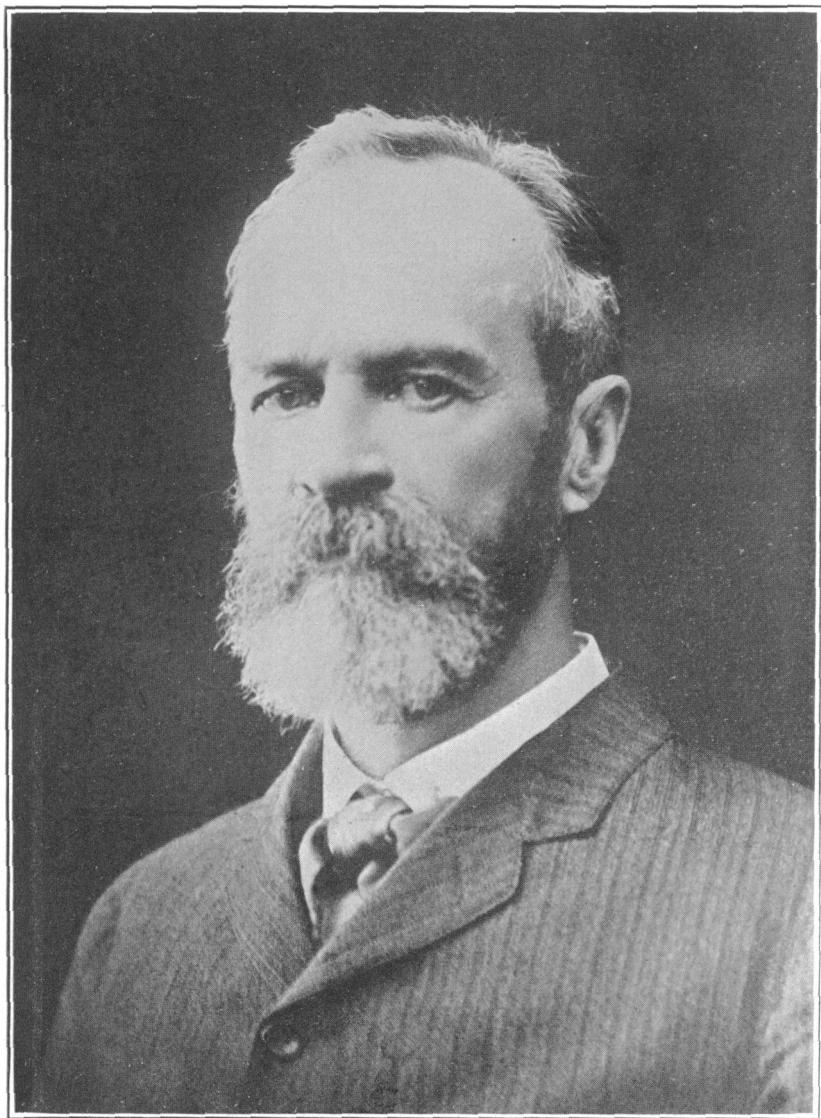
My whole life seems to consist in doing things to oblige other people, in order to get the field clear to begin my proper work, but every clearing only leads to a new crop of alien duties, so I *never* begin.

The letters show how largely this was true and are themselves a striking instance. James cast his bread prodigally upon the waters; it is fortunate that it has been returned to the world by giving a permanent place in American Literature to letters written in large measure to oblige other people or to fulfill family and personal obligations.

The best notice that can be given to letters of this character is quotations from them, and it may be as well to use those not accessible in the book. There are here reproduced a facsimile of the last page of a letter that shows James's characteristic handwriting and methods, and there is printed in full a letter written at about the same time in 1898, when he was interested in investigations of the medium, Mrs. Piper. It is as follows:

I herewith return Münsterberg's letter, and the copy of yours to him. I confess I am astonished that he should have made objection to its insertion in the *Psych. Rev.* It is purely objective criticism and the personalities are all to the point of illustrating the difficulty of keeping practically to his professed point of view about measurement. I can't understand such sensitiveness in one who is himself so sarcastic in his criticisms, and I shall say so to him. Surely *The Psychological Review* is the place for such discussions.

I think you have been unfair to M's article in merely advertising to this dubious epistemological aspect of it. I regretted that he had lugged such a subtlety into the Atlantic. But I rejoiced in any expression from an authority like him which might tend to destroy in the teachers' eyes the prestige of all this industrious mystification to which they are exposed about the immense help which is to come to them from psychological laboratories and measurements. It seems to me arrant bosh and humbug, in the main. Scripture is the loudest voiced sinner, though not the most influential, and he deserves to be sat down on hard. It is the *amount* of their claims, and the utter *unreality* of their tone that are so false. Of course teaching and psychology have got to keep in connexion, and M-g and I, as he says in his letter, keep them in connexion most thoroughly in our teaching of the elementary courses here. But to flourish elementary measurements before the teachers' eyes as his own "ideal" goal seems to me to be little short of criminal. It is following an idol of



WILLIAM JAMES

asked Mrs. Letby to come to Mrs. P., he said: "I am hyphenated, I got such results as you relate, I should surely conclude that I have hyphenated," I said, "then why do you affect to affect us?" "I see of her never dreamed of it yourself" "O, no - I should never suffer my wife to go to such a place." "I call that real spirituality, & action from being next words towards psychological research. Continue along that line and you will be saved will very likely after "passing away" become a "cabinet control" and instruct the younger generation in spiritual things.

Yours for the truth -
as we always subscribe our-
selves) Wm James

the cave out of all connexion with real life.

As regards my reply to you, make any rejoinder you think best. I should like to write a short (and strictly objective) report on Hodgson's report for the P. R.'s July number, but I promise in advance to keep dumb about your rejoinder in Science.

Your soul seems much burdened by "psychical research"—I wish there were a better name for it! In the matter of St. Januarius, I thought that one of the Germans of the Marine Zoology Station had published an article about it, corroborating the phenomenon entirely, but explaining it as a periodical growth of bacterial slime which could be imitated artificially. (I wish that my memory were better). It surely is premature to say "so much the worse for the Universe," as you do, apropos of any sort of facts which might come true. It all depends on the *interpretation*. I must say that the "Scientist" mind seems to me to be characterized by as sectarian a spirit as any. And apropos of that, let me correct a misunderstanding which others as well as you have undergone as to the words "soi-disant scientist" once used, I forget where, by me. You supposed me to have meant to deny that the individuals in question were genuine scientists. All I meant was to cast contempt on the word "scientist," for which I have a dislike, though it is evidently doomed to acquire the rights of citizenship. It suggests to me the priggish sectarian view of science, as something *against* religion, *against* sentiment, etc., and I merely meant (I wish I could turn to the passage) to suggest the narrowness of the sort of mind that should delight in *self-styling itself* "scientist," as it proceeded to demolish psychical researchers, and not to imply in the least that all those who rejected psych. R. were spurious scientists (in the good sense of the term).

You probably won't read me to the end.

Yours as ever,
W. J.

The two volumes of "The Letters" have frontispieces showing James at the ages of fifty-three and sixty-five. The photograph here reproduced was taken by the Luxcroft Studio, Fitchburg, Mass., apparently when James was about fifty-five years old.

DINNER IN HONOR OF DR. KEEN

On January 20, 1921, a dinner was tendered to Dr. William Williams Keen, the eminent Philadelphia surgeon, at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel, in Philadelphia, in celebration of his eighty-fourth birthday. Between five and six hundred subscribers, representing all parts of the country, and all of the learned professions, and the fields of diplomacy, industry, finance, and the public services, joined in honoring Dr. Keen. In addition about four hundred ladies listened to the addresses which were followed by a reception.

The presiding officer and toastmaster was Dr. Keen's friend and colleague, Dr. George E. deSchweinitz, professor of ophthalmology in the University of Pennsylvania. The speakers, who dwelt on various phases of the activities of Dr. Keen's distinguished career, had all been closely associated with him in one or more of these fields of work. They were: Dr. J. Chalmers DaCosta, his one-time assistant, now Gross professor of surgery, in the Jefferson Medical College, in which chair he had succeeded Dr. Keen on the retirement of the latter from active teaching; Dr. William H. P. Faunce, president of Brown University, of which institution Dr. Keen is an alumnus, and of which he has been for many years a most active trustee; Dr. William H. Welch, of the Johns Hopkins University, and the Hon. David Jayne Hill, former ambassador to Germany.

The many letters of congratulation to the guest of the evening had been collected and bound in three volumes, and these were presented by Major General M. W. Ireland, surgeon general of the United States Army, who detailed Dr. Keen's connection with the Medical Department of the Army, beginning with his services in the field and in the hospitals during the Civil War, and down to, and including the World War, when he held